

Master Alchemist Khunrath: As Practiced from a Vajrayana Perspective, By Radiant Ra

[For my Son Nate, who I hope may someday see the significance of these things I have written about.]

While not presuming to have the only correct interpretation of a master alchemist like Henricus Khunrath, I would like to suggest one way we can apply him, along the lines of our late esteemed friend, Sasha Shulgin's assessment of alchemy as "meditation." This approach assumes a certain universal understanding of Reality as advanced by the many perennial Wisdom traditions of both East and West. So in my case, I draw from experience of the root teachings of Indian and Tibetan Vajrayana to work with parallel resonances in Khunrath's text; taking a central passage of his core instruction as representative of how we may best apply him.

Although this *particular* passage is from his book, *Hyleal Chaos*, he engages in cross-referencing here to the illustrative plates of his famous *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom*; especially *plate iii*, which, from a Vajrayana perspective, is a *Yidam*: a divine "Self" projection that he calls the "Son of the Great World."

This is not a specifically *gender*-oriented figure, but rather an androgynous ideal for extracting pure Realization from the natural "chaos" of Mind with its *incessant* proliferation of random thought, "covering" the mind, like "mist obscuring the sun." The trick is to *recognize* in this raw matter, this chaotic jumble of thinking, the undiluted flow of Living Water --
Awareness!

Such a pristine cognition is *non-conceptual*; likened by our Author to an "Aethereal water" that arises as the

sharpest, clearest “vinegar of the Wise,” bathing and *dissolving* all entanglements of thought. The terminology is apt, because, in Vajrayana schools of practice, this perception that “cuts through” mental obscurity is “clear light” itself.

The *physical* basis of this water and perception is rooted in “Salt,” expressive of a Universal (or as our Author says, *Catholic*) preservative principle; as well as the actual saline “well-spring” of the eyes. One of the primary texts of Indian and Tibetan Vajrayana schools, the *Guhyasamaja-Tantra*, confirms the true experience of our sense organs as “clear light”: “*Whatever be the sense organ and its range, each of them is light only.*”

This “light only” is the penetration of the discriminating filters that otherwise *cloud* ordinary perception. The resulting experience is, *simultaneously*, one of bliss and emptiness, or what is the same thing, compassion and wisdom: compassion, which is the joy of highest, all-inclusive love; wisdom which comprehends the hollow nature of seemingly separated phenomena.

Here we have the Alchemical Key that simultaneously unlocks, purifies, and regenerates things. Our Author *speaks* of this with a sublime eloquence that bypasses all of our superficial confusions about his imagery: “This Catholic Medicinal Well of Living Water and Oil of Gladness, now learn, thou Artful, Most Agreeable to Nature Artists, to pump and draw; so canst thy eager thirsty Art crave the very same Universal of Philosophers, flowing from this Philosophical Nectar, that in all of you gushes, refreshes, and quickens.”

Referring us again to his Divine projection - the “Son of the Great World” - he admits that “Christ” is well said to be a way of signifying or symbolizing this, not in a dissimilar sense! But the Tibetan *Yidam* may also be considered a working model of the same. We are talking

about the vivific *flow* of Awareness from this “Self” that simultaneously revivifies *everything*.

In highest Tantric systems, *compassion and wisdom* are typified as this secret red-and-white Nectar that flows from our purified Awareness, while the *same* realization is framed in the *Christianized* alchemical lexicon as “blood-and-water.” There is both a Gnostic and an orthodox significance to the latter, in that *matter* as well as spirit is redeemed by this twofold, *non-dual*, eau de vie.

Logically *following* from this, Khunrath’s grand *conclusion* is mounted upon a crescendo of the imagery we quoted from above: “A genuine Philosopher knows, believes, and *confesses* no other Natural Blood-and-Water that bathes, purifies, and regenerates Bodies, and can make them perfect, and more than perfect, than the dear Catholic Rosy Colored Blood-and-Aethereal Water *that with Artful Power* flows forth from Our Native Son of the Great World.”

I only wish to add as a clarifying remark, the tremendous emphasis placed in Vajrayana on “skillful means,” which is precisely our learning how to practice with the *artfulness* that arises from a correct understanding.

For a more comprehensive English translation of Khunrath’s alchemical instructions in *Hyleal, Pri-material, Universal Natural Chaos*, together with the illustrative plates from his *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom*, please see my new edition of the same title, published and available from Salamander and Sons - Russell R. Yoder, June 2014.